

ABSTRACT

TITLE: Skola för lönsamhet. Om elevers marknadsanpassade villkor och vardag

ENGLISH TITLE: Schooling for profit. The marketization of students' everyday life

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The aim of the thesis is twofold: to explore the ways in which the transformation of the Swedish elementary school can be understood through Marxist theory; and, by ethnographic methods, understand the everyday lives of students and teachers in light of the transformation of the educational system.

The ethnography has been conducted by observations and interviews during a total of six months at two different schools, *Libera* and *Publica*. While *Libera* is a charter school, owned by a private investment company, *Publica* is municipally administrated. The former is based in the central part of the city, while the latter is located in a more economically marginal and geographically peripheral area. At *Libera*, students plan their own schedules and work load and they also set their own goals. At *Publica*, the students are organized in a more conventional, meaning collective, structure.

By discussing marketization, which includes private as well as public actors, scholars foreground the competition that exists between schools through the Swedish voucher-system as well as the transactional relationship that reshapes the relationship between students and teachers. To describe the market rationales by which the public schools must operate the already established concept of New Public Management has been used. However, still no terminology can be found to describe the private actors' way of functioning. By returning to Marx's concepts of formal and real subsumption, I offer new ways to conceptualize the shift in character of education and how privately-owned schools operate, meaning how surplus value is created in the everyday life of students and in their pedagogical relations. As my results show, more efficient and flexible ways to organize teaching and pedagogical practices have emerged as new scale logics are developed by private actors who are part of big investment companies. Due to the competition, both *Libera* and *Publica* adopt a strong market rationale in their organizational arrangements and pedagogical expectations.

Besides conceptualizing schooling on an organizational level, I also seek to address the premises and effects of the learning situation for students in a milieu that is characterized by both flexible and standardized management. Despite the different characteristics of the schools, the market rationales, which dovetailed well with the result-based (state-arranged) management, tended to create alienating conditions for students and teachers in their daily work. Everyday school life was occupied with grade talks and very little time was given for pedagogical "detours"; the students were mostly trying to crack the code and the ones who could not manage the pace were systematically left behind (eliminated). In many cases, whether it was in more successful situations or during processes of (self)elimination, students were often left alone. The expectation of being self-propelled dominated the pedagogical relationship, which translated into the pressure of constant performance and little space to be "unskilled" or explorative. In a situation when school organizations are in competition with each other and are expected to present high numbers (in terms of grades and economic efficiency), the already motivated or skilled students appear as attractive and desirable. The results show how schooling continues to maintain, and in some ways accentuates, segregation and social reproduction.